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A STUDY IN BUTTS AND TIPS.

BY WASHINGTON MATTHEWS.

The ceremonial observances of the Indian priest are tediously numerous and minute. To the superficial observer they may seem equally arbitrary and meaningless, but a closer acquaintance with them shows that they are all based on definite theories, doctrines, or conceptions, and are consistent to a marvelous degree.

To declare with confidence what the underlying idea of any series of symbols may be is often impossible. The study of the symbols in any one race of people, in any one order of priesthood or in any one ceremony may be fruitless; but let us record painstakingly what we observe, and in the course of time the comparative study of our observations may bring a solution. I shall venture at present no conjecture as to the ultimate meaning of certain observances I am about to describe, but shall place them on record as suggestive to other observers who may have an opportunity to seek for something similar in the rites of other tribes.

These observances exist among the Navajo shamans and are to be seen in all of their many rites which I have witnessed. They arise from a marked distinction made between the butt and the tip—the cardiac and the distal, the basal and the terminal, the central and the peripheral—ends of all things. Through all Navajo symbolism the butt and the tip are carefully distinguished from each other, and the former always has a precedence over the latter.

The majority of the sacrifices offered to the gods are made by filling sections of reed (*Phragmites communis*) with native tobacco. In cutting up the reed used for a series of cigarettes they cut off a piece first from the end nearest the root, and they continue to cut off as many pieces as may be necessary from butt to point. The pieces, according as they are cut, are notched near the butt (with a stone knife), so that the relations of the two extremities of the piece may not be forgotten. All through the painting of the cigarettes and the various manipulations that follow, the butt end must be the nearer to the operator, and the tip end the further away from him. Since the cigarette-maker sits in the west of the medicine-lodge facing the

east the cigarettes while there must lie east and west, with the tips to the east.

If a number of cigarettes are made for one act of sacrifice the first piece cut off is marked with one notch near the base, the second piece with two notches, the third piece with three notches, the fourth piece with four notches, all near the butt ends. This is done in order that they may always be distinguished from one another and their order of precedence from butt to tip may not be disregarded. When they are taken up to be painted, to have the sacred feathers of the blue bird and yellow bird inserted into them, to be filled with tobacco, to be sealed with moistened pollen, or to be symbolically lighted with the rock-crystal, the piece that came from nearest the butt (the senior cigarette, let us call it) is taken first, that nearest the tip last. When they are collected to be placed in the patient's hands, when they are applied to his or her person, and, finally, when they are taken out and sacrificed, this order of precedence is always observed.

The order of precedence in position when sacrifices are laid out in a straight row is from north to south; the senior sacrifice is in the northern extremity of the row, the junior or inferior in the southern extremity. When they are laid out in a circle the order is from east back to east by way of the south, west, and north.

The gods to whom the sacrifices are made have commonly also an order of precedence, and when such is the case the senior sacrifice is dedicated to the higher god, the junior sacrifice to the lower god.

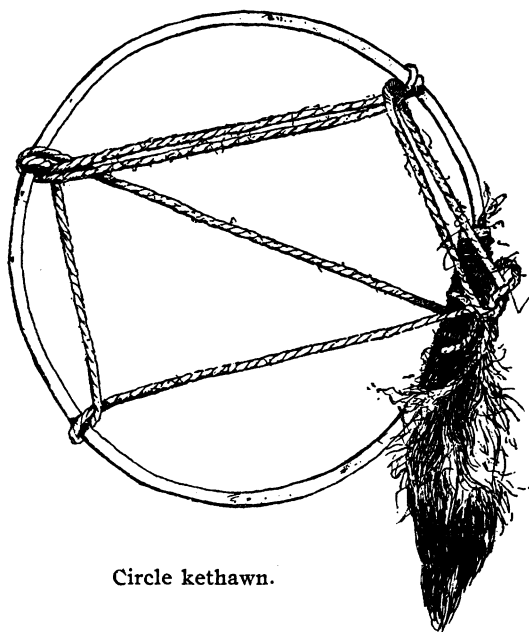
When it is required that other articles, such as feathers, beads, powdered vegetable and mineral substances, be sacrificed with the cigarettes, all these things are placed in corn-husks. To do this the husks are laid down on a clean cloth with their tips to the east, the cigarettes are laid in them one by one, each in a separate husk, with their tip ends to the east, and the sacred feathers are added to the bundle with their tips also to the east.

The most sacred substance of the Navajo priest is pollen. The pollen of various plants is used, but that of the corn is the kind most frequently employed. When dry pollen is sprinkled on the cigarette it is sprinkled from butt to tip. When moist pollen is daubed on the side of the cigarette it is daubed from butt to tip.

When a willow or other shrub is cut for some specially sacred object, as, for instance, to make the plumed wands with which the

shamans surround their dry paintings, pollen is rubbed on the stump and then scattered by the ascending hand in the air, in the place where the tree grew, from butt to tip, as if in sacrifice to the spirit of the tree; this with a prayer that the shrub may grow again. The top of the shrub, if trimmed off, is set upright as near to the stump as possible.

If the sacrifice is to be applied to the person of an invalid in order to effect a cure, it is first pressed to the soles of the feet and then to other parts of the body, going upward and ending with the crown of the head or with the mouth, which they properly regard as the extreme tip of the human being. If pollen is to be scattered on or applied to the person, a similar ascending order is observed.



Circle kethawn.

In some ceremonies pollen is sprinkled on the sacred masks while they lie face upward on the ground; in others it is sprinkled on dry paintings which represent these masks. It is applied in three places—the cheeks and the nose. It is sprinkled upward on each cheek, but downward on the nose, *i. e.*, from its butt to its tip.

In their sacred paintings, wherever the figures of men or plants are arranged radiating from the center, the feet or roots are always

directed toward the center of the picture and the heads or tips toward the periphery.

Other sacrifices—kethawns, or messages to the gods, as they are sometimes called—are made of various kinds of vegetable substances and in a great variety of shapes and colors. In making and handling these, also, the distinction between butt and tip is carefully regarded.

The accompanying figure represents, about half size, one of these sacrifices (which may be called a circle kethawn) belonging to the first night of the great ceremony of Kledji-Qaçal. The circle kethawns are twelve in number. Each is made of a carefully selected twig of aromatic sumac, two spans long. The diameter of the circle must be equal to that of a circle made by the constructor by bringing together the tips of his two bent forefingers and the tips of his two bent thumbs. It is usually about five inches, depending, of course, on the size of the constructor's hand. Great care must be taken in peeling the twig so as not to cut the surface of the wood beneath the bark, and great care must be taken, too, in bending it, for a fracture or abrupt bend ruins the twig for its sacred purposes. Held before the operator, it is bent sunwise. In bringing the ends together to complete the circle, the butt end goes the nearer to the center; the tip overlaps the butt and is placed on the circumference. The ends are tied together by means of a yucca fiber (fiber of leaf of *Yucca baccata*) exactly two spans long. To make the tie, the butt of the fiber is applied to the butt end of the twig, at first parallel to the latter and then encircling it so as to secure the parallel part in its place. The fiber is next wound around the spliced extremities of the twig until it is nearly all used; it is then secured by passing the tip end under the last turn and drawing it tight, in such a manner that its free extremity shall lie parallel with and on top of the extremity of the twig. Should now either the twig or the fiber extend beyond the other, the redundant part is cut off so as to make both exactly the same length, and this must be carefully done, so as not to injure the underlying surface of the twig.

When the circles are all completed a string is firmly tied to each and then secured in four places to the circle, so as to form on it an approximate square, with a loose crochet-knot, which comes easily apart when the free extremity is pulled. Each woollen string is a little over a natural yard in length, *i. e.*, it measures from the center

of the left breast to the end of the right thumb, the arm being fully extended. At the free end of each string is a white, downy eagle feather, which is so tied on that its butt is approximate to what may be considered the butt end of the string—the end further from the plume—and its tip approximates the tip end of the string. The butt of the string is tied on the circle at the splice, is then carried sun-wise as it is applied to the kethawn, and loosely secured by a crochet half-knot near the site of the first tie.

These kethawns are piled up, one on top of another, as they are prepared, and are placed in a sacred basket. Although they undergo several manipulations, all are so arranged that when the kethawns come to be applied to the sick or bewitched man whom they are intended to heal, that which was made first comes on top of the pile and the others come in the order in which they were made, the circle made last being at the bottom. They are applied to the patient by three different gods, *i. e.*, men wearing the masks of gods, each one of whom enters the lodge singly, takes a single kethawn, applies, and carries it out. Each god therefore enters four times in order that the twelve kethawns may be disposed of. A fourth god belongs to the group, but he performs a different office. The last act of each application is to put the kethawn to the patient's lips, seize the plumed end, and unravel the string with a single pull. The god, still holding on to the string by its plumed end (the other being tied to the wooden ring), drags the kethawn out behind him along the floor of the lodge. Other very interesting ceremonies performed at this time will not be described here, as they throw no additional light on the subject of butts and tips.

As each sacrifice is taken out of doors, the string is wound loosely around the ring and the object is laid on the roof of the entrance to the lodge, where it remains the rest of the night. At dawn next morning all the kethawns are taken back into the lodge. Here the shaman takes off the strings and puts them back in his medicine bag. He unties the fastenings of the kethawns. He straightens out the yucca fibers and lays them together, parallel to one another, butt to butt and tip to tip. He does the same with the sumac twigs, and then makes one bundle of all the objects, laying them all tip to tip. While he does this the tips are held further from him than the butts and toward the east. This work finished, he hands the bunch of twenty-four articles to an assistant, who takes also a little corn meal in the hollow of his left hand and a small bag of pollen in his

right hand. The assistant goes forth holding the tips of the twigs in advance. He runs a short distance in a northerly direction from the lodge. He lays his bunch of sacrifices horizontally in some secure place above the ground, such as the narrow fork of a tree. Murmuring a short prayer, he sprinkles meal on the objects from butt to tip with the left hand and sprinkles pollen on them in the same direction with the right hand. Then, leaving the sacrifice to the mercy of the elements, he turns around to the right and runs back to the lodge.

As indicated above, the strings are not sacrificed. They are properties of the shaman, contemporaneous with his professional career, and are used in various rites where loosening of some evil spell is to be symbolized. When the shaman unties them from the rings he bundles them up in a certain prescribed and invariable manner, always putting the eagle plumes together, *i. e.*, laying the strings tip to tip and pointing them all in the same direction. The strings are made for the shaman on the occasion of conducting his first ceremony after his ordination (if we can call the rite of admission into a pagan priesthood ordination), and he retains them ever after. If his first patient be a woman, it is she who spins the yarn for the strings. If his first patient be a man, it is his wife or other near female relative who does the spinning.

To record all the cases in which I have witnessed this ceremonial distinction between the butt and the tip would be to write a volume. I hope the instances given above will sufficiently serve to illustrate the principle.

KHÉ SUPERSTITION REGARDING THE COLOBUS MONKEY.—In speaking of the African people of Khé (lat. $3^{\circ} 29' S.$, long. $37^{\circ} 26' E.$) Mrs. French-Sheldon says: "They have a curious superstition in connection with the Colobus monkey which I found among no other tribes. They believe that their ancestors inhabit the bodies of these creatures, and under no circumstances whatever will they kill or knowingly permit to be killed one of these beautiful apes, and on approaching the forest where the monkeys abide in great numbers there is an odd silence and furtive glances, as the natives pick their steps with precaution and almost hesitation, that would seem to indicate an honest belief in their superstition."—*Jour. Anthropol. Inst., Great Britain and Ireland*, xxi, No. 4.